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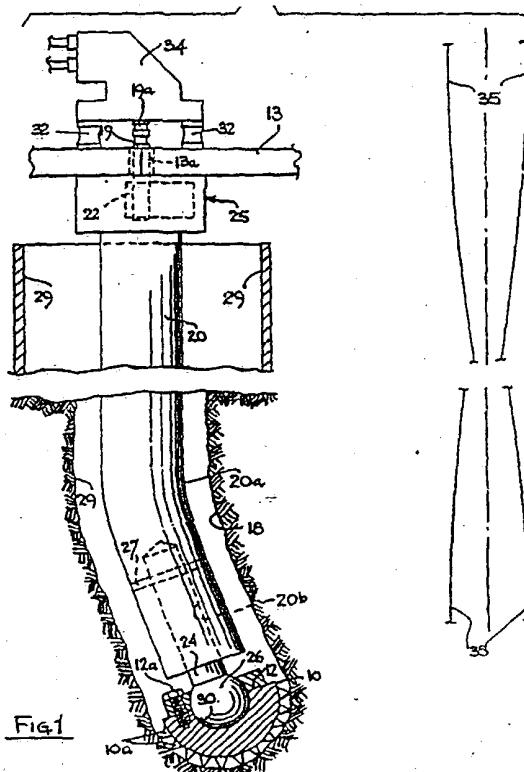
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(54) Method and apparatus for directional drilling using sonic energy.

(57) A sonic boring tool which employs sonic energy in implementing its boring action is lowered down a well to a region thereof where the flow of effluent is restricted by clogging and contamination. A curved bend (20A) is provided in the string (20) above the tool (10) such that the tool is oriented for drilling into the formation laterally from the well. The drill string employed is flexible so that it can follow the curved path of the tool. The tool may comprise a drill bit, sonically driven by means of an orbiting mass oscillator (25) coupled to the drill string or may comprise a hydraulic drilling tool in which hydraulic pulsating jets are generated in response to sonic energy developed in an orbiting mass oscillator and coupled to the tool through a resonantly driven drill string. In one embodiment a rotary table (13) is provided to enable the rotation of the tool in one direction or the other or alternatively in opposite directions to obtain a variety of drilling patterns.



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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR DRILLING A BOREHOLE

This invention relates to methods and apparatuses for drilling a bore hole. More particularly, this invention relates to a method and apparatus for sonically boring transversely of a well to increase the flow of effluent therefrom and more particularly to such a method and apparatus employing a sonic tool which is curved laterally from the drill string on which the tool is suspended.

The earthen formation surrounding a well through the passage of time tends to become contaminated and clogged so that the flow of effluent therefrom becomes restricted. Various techniques have been utilised in the prior art to alleviate this situation such as hydraulic fracturing (HYDRO-FRAC) and the use of sonic energy for fracturing an earthen formation surrounding a well such as described in US patent no. 4,471,838.

The present invention involves a method and apparatus for drilling into a formation laterally from the well in a selective manner such as to penetrate desired portions of the formation which may be clogged or contaminated. The method and apparatus of this invention is particularly useful when combined with hydraulic fracturing of the well bore. In such a situation surface pumps are employed for conventional hydraulic fracturing. The lateral convoluted boring accomplished by the method and apparatus of the present invention provides an additional bored area through which the hydraulic fracturing can be extended, the hydraulic fracturing thus working in conjunction with the lateral boring accomplished by means of the present invention.

It is an object of this invention to provide an improved method and apparatus for drilling a bore hole.

According to one aspect of this invention there is provided a method for drilling a borehole laterally into an earthen formation surrounding a well comprising the steps of:

lowering a boring tool into the well on a flexible elastic drill stem, said drill stem having an upper straight main portion and a lower curved portion above the tool which causes the tool to angulate transversely away from the longitudinal axis of the main upper portion of the stem;

coupling sonic energy to said drill stem to cause the tool to penetrate into said formation in a curved borehole path running substantially transversely of the longitudinal axis of the well; and

while the sonic energy is being coupled to the drill stem selectively turning the drill stem to cause the tool to form a borehole path having a predesired pattern.

According to another aspect of this invention there is provided apparatus for use in drilling a

borehole laterally into an earthen formation surrounding a well comprising:

a drill stem of a flexible elastic material;

a boring tool attached to one end of said drill stem; said drill stem having a main upper straight portion and a lower curved portion above the tool;

means for suspending said tool in said well from said drill stem;

means for driving said oscillator so as to cause the tool to cycloidally vibrate at a sonic frequency;

means for selectively turning the stem to form a borehole having a predesired pattern;

whereby the tool penetrates into said formation to form a curved borehole running substantially transversely of the longitudinal axis of the well having said predesired pattern.

It is an advantage of this invention that it increases the yield of wells.

It is another advantage of this invention that it provides a sonic lateral boring method and apparatus which can be employed in conjunction with hydraulic fracturing to increase the yield of wells.

Other objects of the invention will become apparent as the description proceeds in connection with the accompanying drawings of which:-

Figure 1 is a side elevational view of a first embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of a second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 3 illustrates a modified form of the curved drill string section which can be utilised in the invention;

Figure 3a is a cross sectional view taken along the plane indicated by 3a-3a in Figure 3;

Figure 4 is a schematic illustration showing the formation of the elongated borehole formed by the embodiment of Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a schematic illustration of a first borehole configuration that can be formed with the device of the invention;

Figure 6 is a schematic illustration showing a second borehole configuration that can be formed with the device of the invention; and

Figure 7 is a schematic illustration of a third bore hole configuration that can be formed with the device of the invention.

Briefly described, the method and apparatus of the invention is as follows. A boring tool which may comprise a sonically driven cutter bit or a hydraulic drive sonic drill is suspended within a well on a flexible drill stem of an elastic material such as steel. A lower portion of the drill stem above the drill is curved so that it angulates transversely away from the longitudinal axis of the main upper portion of the stem. An orbiting mass oscillator is

connected to the drill stem and driven at a frequency such as to effect resonant standing wave vibration of the stem typically with the oscillator connected at the top of the stem. The sonic energy so generated causes the drill to drill transversely into the earthen formation surrounding the well in a curved drilling path dictated by the curvature in the drill stem. This curved drilling path can be made to take various configurations as may be desired by selectively rotating the drill stem in one direction or the other by means of a rotary table or the like.

Referring now to Figure 1 a first embodiment of the invention is illustrated. This embodiment employs the various forms of drilling mechanism of US patent no 4,615,400 issued October 7 1986, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference and which disclosure will be but briefly set forth herein. One form of the system employs an orbiting mass oscillator 25 which is mounted firmly in energy transmission relationship to the main vibratory drill assembly which comprises flexible drill string 20. The orbiting mass oscillator has a drive shaft 19 which is rotatably mounted in sleeve bearing 13a formed in platform 13. Attached to shaft 19 is eccentrically weighted rotor 22. Rotor drive shaft 19 is coupled to a flexible shaft 19a which is rotatably driven by motor 34 mounted on platform 13 by means of vibration isolators 32. Drill stem 20 is fabricated of a flexible elastic material such as steel and is fixedly attached to the housing of oscillator 25. Drill bit 10 is in the shape of a hemisphere and has a plurality of cutter teeth 10a positioned over the entire outer surface thereof. A spherical ball-socket bearing 30 is formed between the inner spherical surface of cutter bit 10 and ball member 26, the cutter bit having limited universal freedom of motion on bearing 30. The cutter bit is retained to ball member 26 by means of ring-shaped retainer member 12, which has an inner spherical surface, this retainer member being held to bit 10 by means of bolts 12a. The bit member 10 is free to turn and move angularly. Ball member 26 is integrally formed with elongated shank member 24, this shank member being pressed firmly into bored out portion 20b of drill stem 20 and retained to the drill stem by means of pin member 27. In the portion of the drill stem directly above the drill bit, there is a curved section 20a which angulates the bit away from the longitudinal axis of the main upper portion of the drill stem. This curvature typically may be an arc of ten degrees of a circle having a radius of fifty feet (or more for handling casings). For drain hold bores the radius may be less than fifty feet. Table 13 is a rotary table capable of rotating the entire drill assembly such as shown for example in US patent no 2,554,005.

When the rotor 22 of oscillator 25 is rotatably

driven it generates a cycloidal vibratory sonic force in drill stem 20. Rotor 22 is preferably driven at a frequency such as to set up a resonant standing wave cycloidal vibration in the drill stem, as indicated by graph lines 35. The drilling operation is as described in the aforementioned US patent no. 4,615,400 except that in view of the curved section 20a in the drill stem, the drilling action will follow a curved path as schematically illustrated in Figure 5, the drill stem passing through an aperture 29a in well casing 29 and following a lateral spiral path, the flexible drill stem bending to follow such path. By rotating the drill stem by means of rotary table 13, various bore hole patterns can be formed. For example, a serpentine pattern such as shown in Figure 6, can be formed by alternately rotating the turntable in opposite directions. A corkscrew pattern such as shown in Figure 7, can be formed by rotating the turntable continually in the same direction. Hydraulic fracturing may be used in conjunction with the drilling action to fracture the bored out portion of such formation.

Referring now to Figure 2, a second embodiment of the invention is illustrated. This embodiment employs the hydraulic driving apparatus described in US patent no. 4,548,281 issued October 22 1985, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. In the present instance, however, rather than employing the mechanism for driving a casing into the ground, the device is rather employed as a hydraulic drill. Sonic oscillator 11 comprises orbiting masses formed by paired eccentric rotors which are driven by engines 44 as described in US patent no 3,189,108. The oscillator-engine assembly is suspended on support beam 46 by means of suspension struts 48, beam 46 in turn being suspended from the hook 49 of a derrick (not shown). Drill stem 43 which is fabricated of a flexible steel is fixedly attached to the casing of oscillator 11. Attached to the bottom end of drill stem 43 is a hydraulic drilling assembly 51 which may be of the type described in connection with Figures 3, 3a and 3b of US patent no 4,548,281.

As in the previous embodiment, a curved section 43a is formed in the drill stem above hydraulic drill bit 51, section 43a having a curvature as described in the first embodiment and causing the bit to follow a curved path in the same manner as previously described.

In operation, the rotors of oscillators 11 are driven by engines 44 at a speed such as to set up longitudinal elastic standing wave vibration in drill stem 43 as indicated by standing wave graph pattern 41. Liquid is fed into casing 43 from line 40 through valve 45 so as to establish a pressure head at the bottom of the hollow drill stem which may be of the order of several hundred pounds per

square inch. The sonic energy will also tend to cause standing wave vibration in the liquid column. The hydraulic drill bit operates as described in aforementioned US patent no. 4,548,281 to displace earthen material by virtue of hydraulic jet action through nozzles contained in drill head 51. The curved well bore may simultaneously be hydraulically fractured by a conventional "hydrofrac" procedure but employing an increased volume of fracturing fluid to accommodate the spirular geometry of the bore.

As for the previous embodiment, the drill stem can be kept stationary to form a spirular bore pattern as shown in Figure 5 or the stem can be rotated in various manners to produce such patterns as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

Teeth 56 are formed along diametrically opposite portions of curved drill stem sections 43a. These teeth, as shown in Figure 4 effectively drill out an elliptical borehole in the earthen formation 18 which may be desirable in certain applications.

It may be desirable to flatten the curved drill stem section 48a as shown in Figures 3,3a. This enables the changing of the angle of bend of section 48a during the drilling operation by increasing the hydraulic pressure which tends to straighten the tube out. In this manner, the radius of curvature of the borehole path can be changed during the operation if such be desired.

While the invention has been described and illustrated in detail, it is to be clearly understood that this is intended by way of illustration and example only and is not to be taken by way of limitation, the spirit and scope of the invention being limited only by the terms of the following claims.

Claims

1. A method for drilling a borehole laterally into an earthen formation surrounding a well comprising the steps of:
lowering a boring tool into the well on a flexible elastic drill stem, said drill stem having an upper straight main portion and a lower curved portion above the tool which causes the tool to angulate transversely away from the longitudinal axis of the main upper portion of the stem;
coupling sonic energy to said drill stem to cause the tool to penetrate into said formation in a curved borehole path running substantially transversely of the longitudinal axis of the well; and
while the sonic energy is being coupled to the drill stem selectively turning the drill stem to cause the tool to form a borehole path having a predesired pattern.
2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the

sonic energy is coupled to the drill stem from an orbiting mass oscillator, said oscillator being driven at a frequency such as to effect resonant standing wave vibration of said stem and tool.

3. A method according to Claim 1 or 2 and additionally including the step of pumping hydraulic fluid into the well to hydraulically fracture the portions of the earthen formation penetrated by the tool.
4. A method according to Claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein, the drill stem is rotated continually in one direction to drill a borehole having a corkscrew pattern.
5. A method according to Claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein, the drill stem is alternately rotated in opposite directions to drill a borehole having a serpentine pattern.
6. A method according to any preceding claim wherein, the boring tool is hydraulic and liquid is fed thereto to effect pulsating hydraulic boring action in response to the sonic energy.
7. A method according to any preceding claim wherein, cutter teeth are formed on diametrically opposite sides of the outer wall of the curved portion of said stem, said teeth engaging the borehole wall so as to laterally widen the borehole.
8. A method according to Claim 7 wherein, the curved portion of the stem is initially flattened and including the additional step of increasing the hydraulic pressure of the liquid to lessen the degree of curvature of the curved portion thereby changing the radius of curvature of the borehole path.
9. A method according to any preceding claim including employing hydraulic power to drive a sonic oscillator which actuates a cutting bit action at the lower end of said stem.
10. Apparatus for use in drilling a borehole laterally into an earthen formation surrounding a well comprising:
a drill stem of a flexible elastic material;
a boring tool attached to one end of said drill stem; said drill stem having a main upper straight portion and a lower curved portion above the tool;
means for suspending said tool in said well from said drill stem;
an orbiting mass oscillator coupled to said drill stem;
means for driving said oscillator so as to cause the tool to cycloidally vibrate at a sonic frequency;
means for selectively turning the stem to form a borehole having a predesired pattern;
whereby the tool penetrates into said formation to form a curved borehole running substantially transversely of the longitudinal axis of the well having said predesired pattern.
11. Apparatus according to Claim 10 wherein, the oscillator is driven at a frequency such as to effect resonant standing wave vibration of the stem and tool.

12. Apparatus according to Claim 10 or 11 and further including means for selectively rotating the stem to form a borehole having a predesired pattern.

13. Apparatus according to Claim 10, 11 or 12 wherein, said means for driving said oscillator comprises a hydraulic drive.

14. Apparatus according to any of Claims 10 to 13 and further including cutter teeth formed on diametrically opposite portions of the outer wall of the curved portion of the stem thereby to form a laterally elongated borehole.

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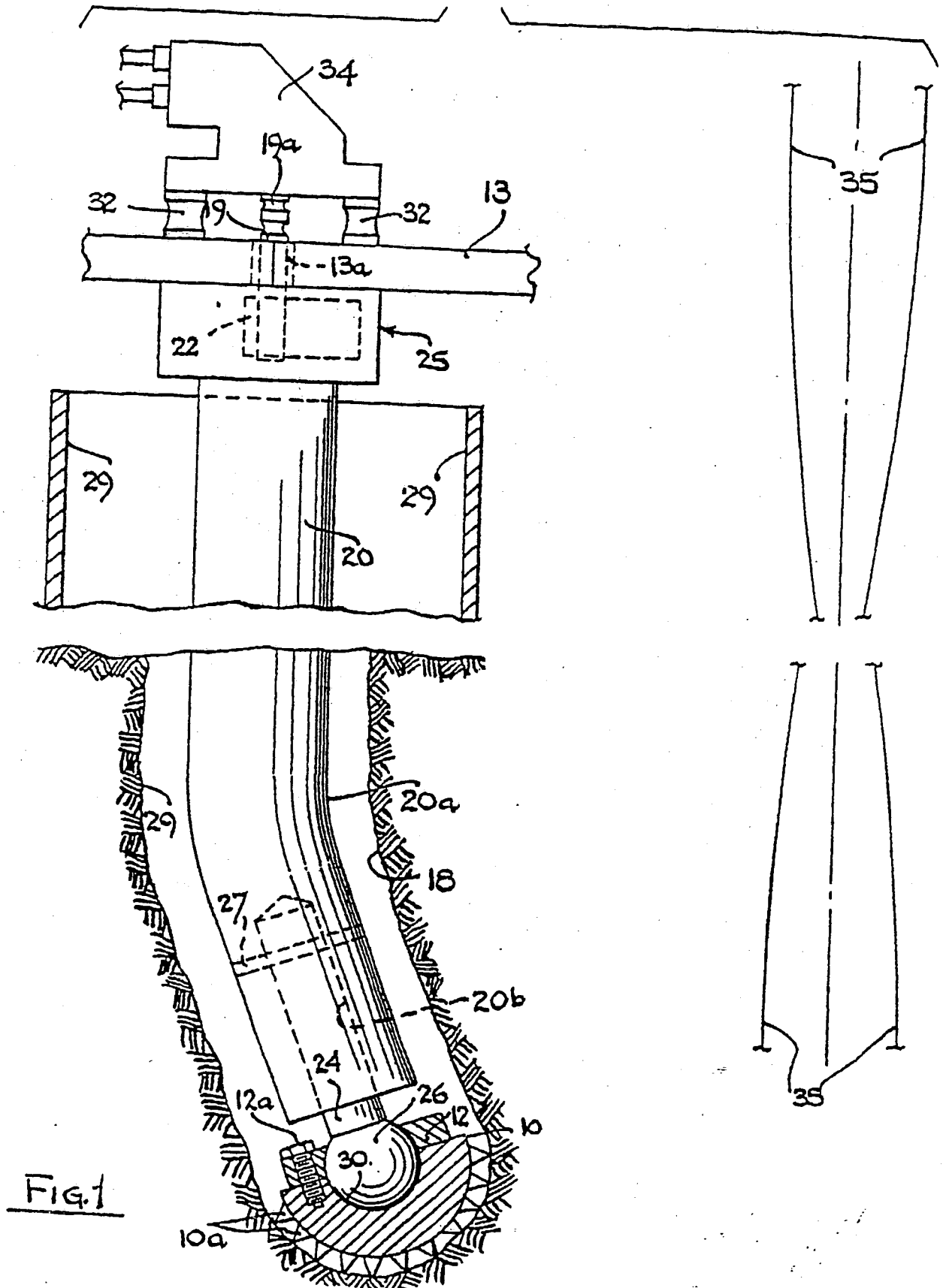


Fig. 1

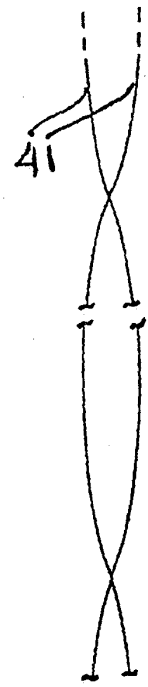
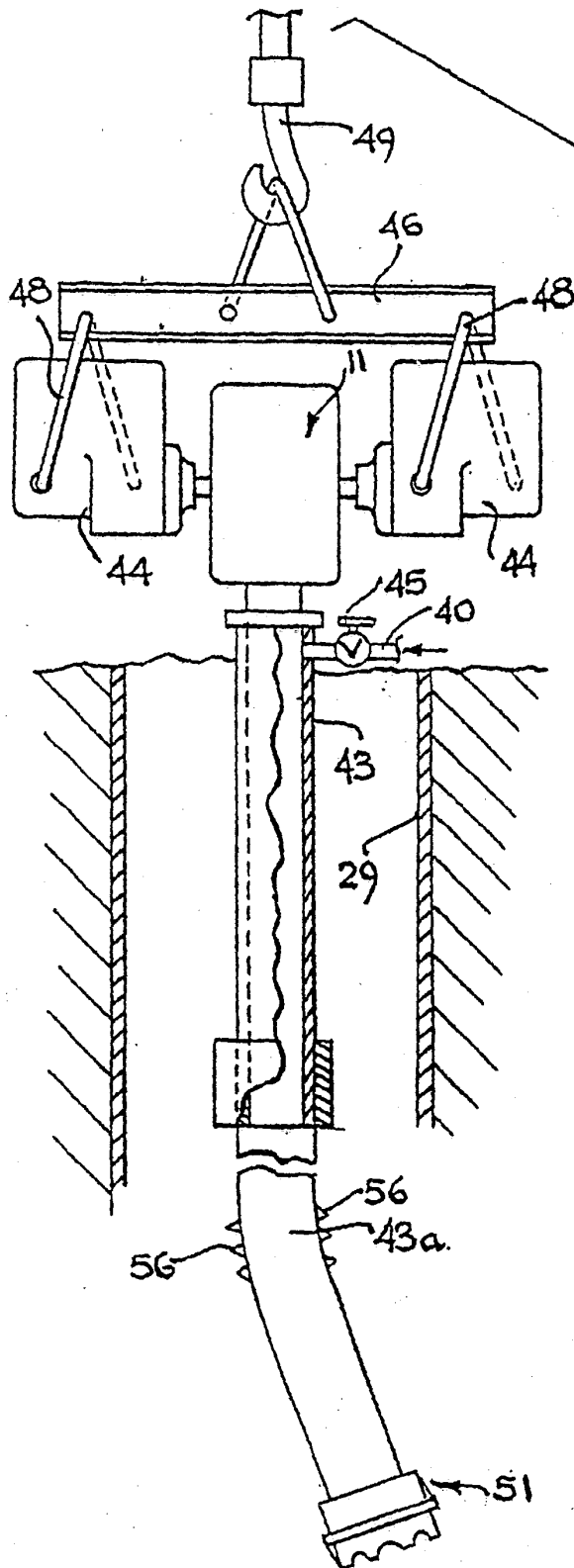


FIG. 2

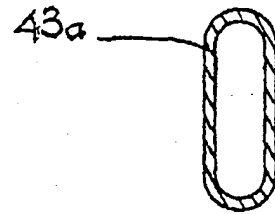
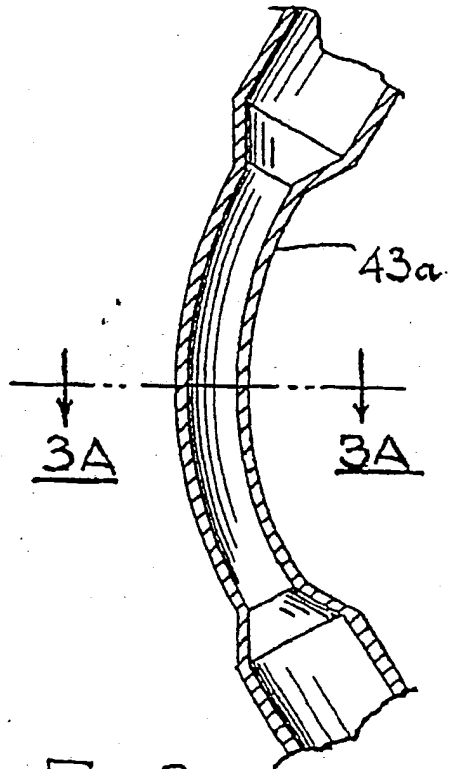


FIG. 3A

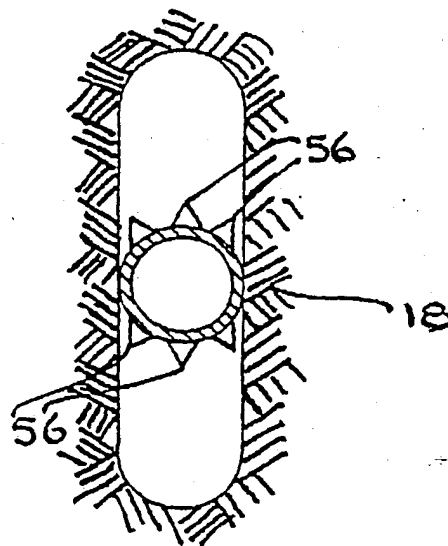


FIG. 4

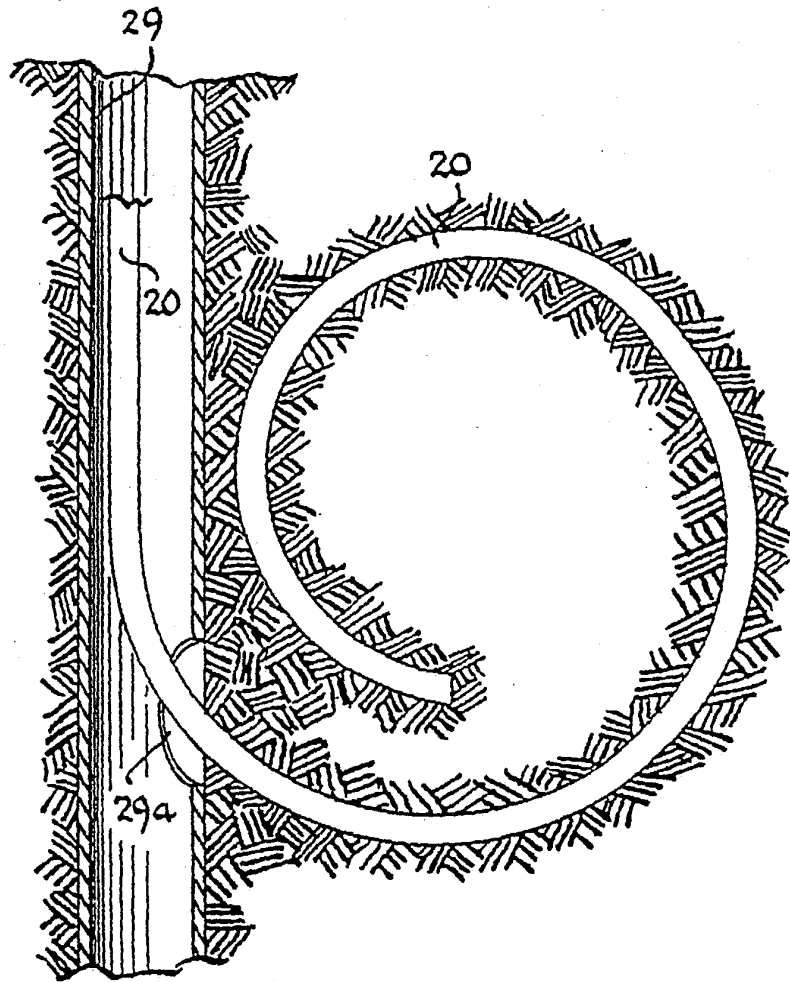


FIG. 5

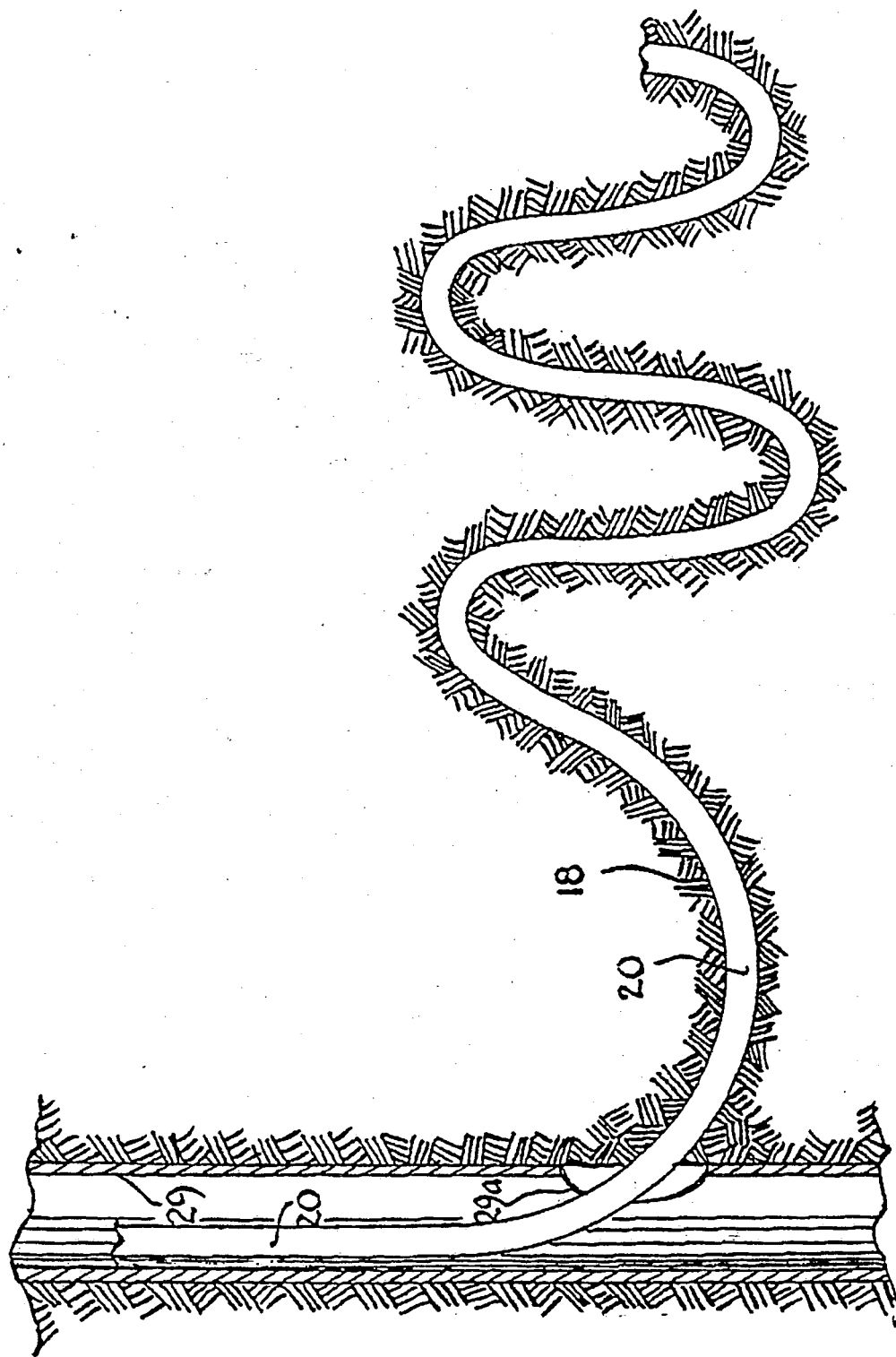


FIG. 6

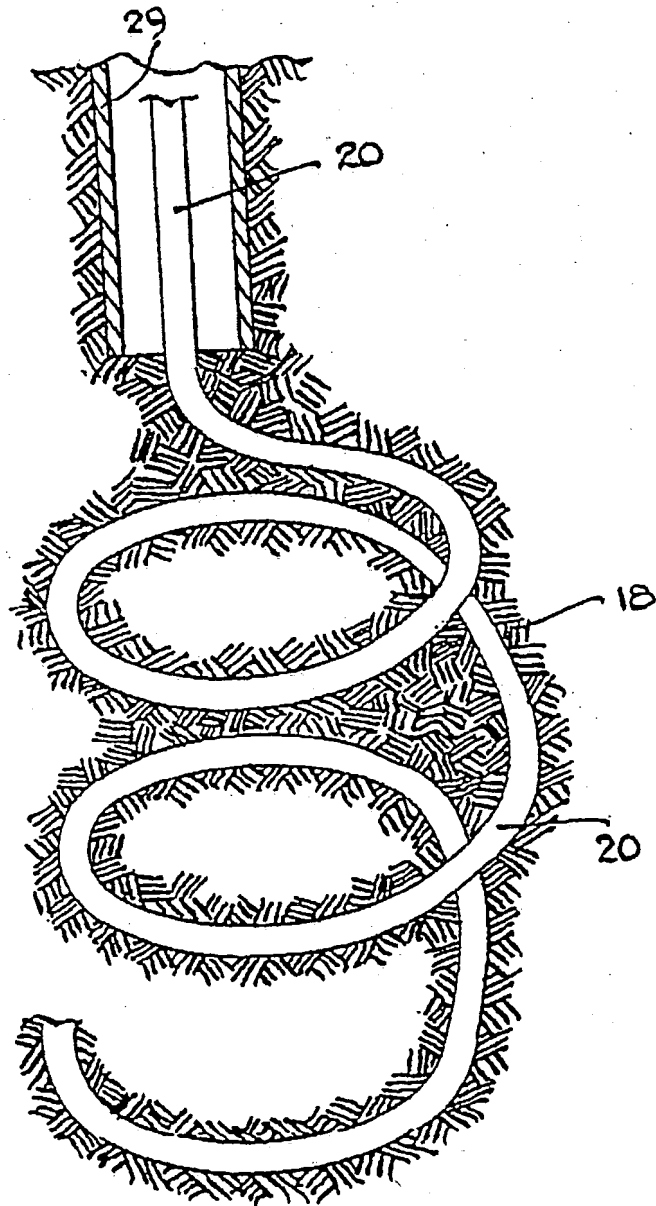


FIG. 7



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 89 30 6916

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 5)
Y	DE-C-3 326 885 (CHRISTENSEN) * Claim 1 *	1-14	E 21 B 7/06 E 21 B 7/24
Y,D	US-A-4 615 400 (BODINE) * Column 3, line 47 - column 4, line 17 *	1,2,4,5 9-13	E 21 B 43/26 E 21 B 7/18
Y,P	US-A-4 548 281 (BODINE) * Abstract *	3,6	
A		1,2,10, 11	
Y	US-A-3 285 349 (BRANDON) * Column 12, line 27 - column 3, line 2 *	7,8,14	
A		1,2,9- 11	
A	US-A-4 243 112 (SARTOR) * Column 4, lines 40-47 *	1-3,9- 11,13	
A	US-A-4 384 625 (ROPER) * Whole document *	1-3,9- 11,13	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 5)
A,D	US-A-4 471 838 (BODINE) * Whole document *	1-3,6, 10	E 21 B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 09-03-1990	Examiner SOGNO M.G.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons A : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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